

about a concerted effort to protect the yet unreserved areas of wilderness identified in the Helman report? And how about a really substantial park in northern New South Wales? — a Ewingar-Washpool-Timbarra-Spirabon-Nymboida-Mann-Guy Fawkes-Chaelundi-Cathedral Rock-New England-Styx River-Oxley-Carrai-Werrikimbie National Park? Then we might feel more confident of the survival of some of our wildlife.

These and other issues raised by Whitehouse might be discussed at greater length, but for a clear statement of what is needed in wildlife conservation in Australia today, Harry Recher has said it all in his keynote address to the A.C.I.U.C.N. Threatened Species Conference, 1989, published in the same issue of *The Australian Zoologist*. I endorse Recher's identification of the areas

in most urgent need of protection in New South Wales; the national estate areas in the south-east forests, all remaining old growth forests, remaining coastal lands, an adequate system of reserves in the Western Division, and all remnants of native vegetation in the Central Division. To these I would add vital inland wetlands-Narran Lake, the Great Cumbung Swamp, and proposed additions to Macquarie Marshes Nature Reserve.

I congratulate the *Australian Zoologist* for publishing these two articles, which will help to guide voluntary conservation bodies in the continuing campaign to save what is left of the natural world before it is wantonly destroyed. There is not much time left and there are many people to be persuaded if we are to succeed.

A former Director's response to: Conserving What?—The basis for nature conservation reserves in New South Wales 1967-1989

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While the paper opens up for argument the question of a proper basis for the selection of nature conservation reserves, and it is a very important one, I don't believe that any comment that I could make would be of value in pursuing the question of what is the correct choice of those offered. This is primarily because I don't possess the scientific training to comment with any authority. But additionally, as I guess I must take a large amount of the responsibility for the course of action taken by the Service during the years 1973 to 1985, I could be seen to be trying to justify (or apologise for) what was done during that time.

I found the paper to be quite stimulating. The historical perspective reminded me of the many problems we had to overcome in negotiations with other government departments, local government councils, private landholders, industry groups, conservation groups and the Commonwealth Government in establishing new reserves during the 12 years I was Director. I was reminded, too, of the long gestation period for the preparation of a nature conservation policy for New South Wales which, despite the efforts of Peter Hitchcock, Jack Giles and myself failed to emerge under that title, as far as I know. But possibly some of the work done on that project provided some of the material for Peter Hitchcock's "Nature Conservation Review ..." in 1985.

Sadly, I must endorse John's comments that:

"The assumption that public policy decisions in nature conservation are made on logical scientific grounds by expert agencies is of course illusory" and;

"Often the dynamics of this interaction (pluralistic decision making) have meant that the nature conservation agency is neither the sole arbiter nor the principal driving force in the reserve establishment process."

And so I believe that John's call for debate on the objectives and priorities for nature conservation reserves should be supported. A possible way to do this would be for your Society to call on the State Government to initiate a formal mechanism to investigate the matter and prepare recommendations to government for action. Without some commitment by the government for a programme of reserve establishment based on a sound scientific basis, it is unlikely that the staffing and funding resources necessary will be available to meet the obviously urgent need which John has identified.

(This was written as a personal letter to the editor, but Don Johnstone kindly allowed it to be published).